

INTRODUCTION OF THE HIGHWAY
AND NATIONAL DEFENSE IN-
VESTMENT ACT**HON. JOHN D. DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 3, 1997

Mr. DINGELL, Mr. Speaker, today I have introduced a piece of legislation which will help Congress finish a job it started earlier this summer when we passed the tax portion of the budget reconciliation package: unleashing the windfall created by the restoration of all Federal gasoline taxes to the Federal highway trust fund.

The legislation I offer today would effectively make possible two very important goals: First, a long-overdue renewal of our national commitment to sound infrastructure; second, a means to do so while meeting the letter, the spirit, and deadline of our commitment to balance the Federal budget by 2002.

When this body agreed to the 5-year budget agreement in July, it accepted a provision added by the other body which redirected into the trust fund the 4.3 cents-per-gallon Federal gasoline tax formerly dedicated to deficit reduction. It was estimated that this would add between \$6 and \$6.5 billion in additional trust fund revenue each year. This provision was accepted not only to end a disingenuous Federal accounting practice, but also to make possible the spending of additional revenue on our Nation's deteriorating infrastructure. While Congress improved a growing problem, it did not solve it: the money is now going to the right place, but it is still trapped and cannot be invested in our roads.

By some estimates, we need to invest nearly twice as much as we do today just to fall no further behind. In my home State of Michigan, roads have deteriorated to the point of being deplorable. The State legislature recently enacted a State gas tax increase to help increase needed highway investment. Meanwhile, Michigan ranks near the bottom in the amount of Federal money invested for roads on a per capita basis. In May, both houses defeated a measure to substantially increase road investments, each by a single vote, after a lot of persuasion to those trying to hold together a budget deal which provided practically level funding for transportation. By considering the legislation I am introducing today, my State and all of our States would realize a considerably greater return on their Federal gas tax contributions.

I would like to remind my colleagues that when Federal investment in our roads grew substantially in 1956, President Eisenhower let the Nation know that a completed interstate system was vital to our national defense. Maintaining a reliable and safe transportation infrastructure is still recognized as important to our national security, and addressing these needs is explicitly recognized in the National Highway System. With our Nation at peace and our economy strong, we have the ability today to make wise choices to preserve the transportation linkages on which all Americans have come to depend. This can only happen, however, if our highway spending keeps pace with the amount of money our drivers pay at the pump in Federal fuel tax.

In the current budget cycle, this House already has contemplated holding defense

spending to the levels of the current fiscal year. I believe that such a proposal is warranted if domestic needs can be identified which clearly would serve our national security interests as well. That is why the legislation I am introducing makes possible an override of the firewall established between defense and discretionary spending. Once this procedural barrier is removed, Congress would be able to liberate \$6.2 billion of the expected boost in highway trust fund revenue without delaying a balanced budget. How? By choosing to slow the growth in defense spending, and instead investing in a part of our national defense network which also supports our everyday interests: Traveling to work and school, shipping more efficiently between points across the Nation, and by upgrading our national road network to improve the safety and mobility of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of the Highways and National Defense Investment Act would definitely create the demand for some tough decisionmaking during the next appropriations process. However, our Nation finds itself in a unique position which not only allows, but demands a new investment: we are at peace, the economy is strong, and we are on a fixed course to balance the budget. When the cold war ended a few years ago, there was much talk in this body about a peace dividend. Budget balancing problems never gave us much of an opportunity to invest that dividend. However, that was before the budget deal. Now we have the chance to finish the job that deal started, and that is show the American people that the highway trust fund is more than a gimmick for a balanced budget. Instead, that trust fund is a tool for growth.

HONORING PRINCESS DIANA

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 3, 1997

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respect to Princess Diana, a woman the world will greatly miss. As a woman and a mother, I have been moved by her caring and her commitment to her sons and to those less fortunate than herself.

Throughout the unremitting scrutiny of Princess Diana's life one thing has shone clearly—her love for her two children. It seems clear that she was devoted to her boys, as they were to her. She gave them her affection, loving attention, and her maternal love and support. My heart aches for those two young men today. I wish them strength and peace.

Princess Diana was clearly a person of great caring and compassion. She chose to use the tremendous prestige afforded her by her station in life to touch the everyday world around her—not the world of wealth and power, but the world of poverty, war, and injustice. She was an advocate for the victims of violence and of poverty.

Her commitment to the hungry, the sick, and the poor in England and around the world should serve as a model to us all. She has lent not just her name, but the strength and warmth of her spirit to a number of causes. She has reached out to extend comfort and an empathetic hand to people whom she felt had been rejected by society including AIDS and

leprosy patients, battered women, and drug addicts. She shook hands with AIDS patients when many people were still afraid to touch them. She penned personal notes to families of hospitalized children she had met. She learned sign language to address an association of deaf persons. She hugged the dying in hospices and exchanged stories with women, like herself, who suffered from eating disorders.

Most recently, Princess Diana turned her attentions to the land mines which have claimed the lives and limbs of so many. In particular, she waged a campaign against land mines in Bosnia and last month was in Sarajevo, mourning the victims of war in private talks with families of people maimed or killed by exploding mines. Her leadership on this issue has helped in moving it to the forefront of England's agenda and in moving even this Nation to a point of compromise.

Princess Diana was a very special woman and the world deeply mourns her loss. She was a princess in more than just name, but in her grace and character. She should be long remembered by women the world over. She will be remembered with deep respect and affection. She truly was the people's princess.

THE BALANCED BUDGET
AGREEMENT OF 1997

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 30, 1997

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, it is very gratifying to be a Member of the 105th Congress which now finds its place in the history books by passing this legislation to balance the Federal budget for the first time since 1969. I am proud to be part of this movement in Government toward responsible fiscal behavior. I am also very pleased that our bottom line is not only a fiscal line but one that accounts for the need to invest in the future.

This balanced budget agreement accomplishes some things that have been driving forces for me both politically and personally. It represents good government—one that exercises fiscal responsibility but also spends money appropriately to provide financial incentives to those who can succeed, compassionate assistance for those in need, and basic protections and services as caretakers of our communities and our environment.

This country has made remarkable progress in reducing the Federal deficit since 1993. While I was not a Member of Congress when the 1993 budget agreement was passed, it is remembered as a budget that called on everyone across the board to accept spending reductions to achieve deficit reduction. The resulting decline in spending, coupled with a very strong economy, has now made it possible to finish the job and balance the budget perhaps as soon as the next year.

The American people will never agree completely on how their Federal tax dollars should be spent. In a democracy, that is to be expected and tolerated. But every American should have confidence that its Government is living within its means and requiring accountability of those investments it chooses to make. Even if those investments are not universally endorsed.